



Spalding's Catchfly at Old Chief Joseph's Gravesite, Oregon

Importance: A Federally-listed Threatened Plant Species

Spalding's catchfly (*Silene spaldingii*) is an herbaceous perennial plant in the pink family (Caryophyllaceae). It is a regional native found predominantly in bunchgrass grasslands and sagebrush-steppe, and occasionally in open pine communities. There are currently 99 known populations, with two thirds of these composed of fewer than 100 individuals each. Occupied habitat includes five geographic regions: the Palouse Grasslands in west-central Idaho and southeastern Washington; the Channeled Scablands in eastern Washington; the Blue Mountain Basins in northeastern Oregon; the Canyon Grasslands of the Snake River and its tributaries in Idaho, Oregon, and Washington; and the Intermontane Valleys of northwestern Montana. Spalding's catchfly continues to be impacted by habitat loss due to human development, habitat degradation associated with adverse grazing and trampling by domestic livestock and wildlife, and invasions of aggressive nonnative plants. In addition, the loss of genetic variability and effects of inbreeding is a problem for many small, fragmented populations where genetic exchange is limited. Other impacts include changes in fire frequency and seasonality, off-road vehicle use, and herbicide spraying and drift.

2011 Status

In August 2011 Nez Perce NHP staff collaborated with representatives from Iwetemlaykin State Park, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the US Forest Service, Oregon Department of Agriculture, and local private landowners to survey Spalding's catchfly in Wallowa county, OR. The team found 22 new plants in and around Nez Perce NHP's site for a total of 76 plants. They also found 300+ plants in adjacent taxlots. Since 2007 surveys have increased population estimates at several sites in the plant's range including the Zumwalt Prairie in the nearby Blue Mountain Basin. That population is now estimated at over 10,000 individuals (R. Taylor, TNC, 2008), making it the largest known population range-wide.

Management Applications

- Conserve, identify, develop, and expand Spalding's catchfly populations and habitat
- Inform general recovery actions at Old Chief Joseph's Gravesite
- Detect habitat degradation and potential resource concerns
- Inform decision making

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Objectives

- Determine the status of Spalding's catchfly at Nez Perce National Historical Park's Old Chief Joseph's Gravesite



The unique combination of short petals, relatively large seeds, and stickiness throughout leaves and stems distinguishes Spalding's catchfly from other similar *Silene* plants.



Surveys are completed when the species is flowering, typically from July through August. In some years flowering continues into September, depending on conditions. Occupied sites range from 1200-5300 feet in elevation.